ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Names:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Department Of Commerce); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Department Of The Interior); U.S. Maritime Administration (Department Of Transportation)

- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program (Treatment Technology Demonstration Projects)

- **Announcement Type:** Initial announcement

- **Funding Opportunity Number:** OAR-SG-2007-2000771

- **Statutory Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 4701 et seq.; 33 U.S.C. 1121-1131; 46 U.S.C. App 1211 (2000); 50 U.S.C. App 1744 (2000).

- **Catalog of Federal Assistance Number:** 11.417, Sea Grant Support; 15.FFA, Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance.

- **Dates:** Letters of intent must be received by the National Sea Grant Office by 5 p.m. EDT on Thursday, September 14, 2006. Full proposals must be received by 5 p.m. EST on Wednesday, January 10, 2007. Only those who submit letters of intent meeting the letter of intent deadline and other requirements of this notice are eligible to submit full proposals.

- **Funding Opportunity Description:** NOAA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Maritime Administration expect to entertain proposals to conduct ballast water treatment technology testing and demonstration projects. The Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program supports projects to develop, test, and demonstrate technologies that treat ships' ballast water in order to reduce the threat of introduction of aquatic invasive species to U.S. waters through the discharge of ballast water. This FFO is only for the treatment technology demonstration projects grants competition described in the FRN. There is a separate FFO for the competition to develop and operate a regional ballast water technology research, development, testing and evaluation facility.

  Depending on 2007 appropriations, NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) expect to make available up to about $1.5 million in FY 2007, and the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD)expects to make available several vessels for use as test platforms, to support ballast water treatment technology demonstration projects. The maximum amount of award will vary with the scale of the proposed project. Depending on the funding

available and the number and quality of proposals received, between 5 and 8 grants with a median value of about $200,000 are anticipated to be awarded.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objectives

The Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program supports projects to develop, test, and demonstrate technologies that treat ships' ballast water in order to reduce the threat of introduction of aquatic invasive species to U.S. waters through the discharge of ballast water. The ultimate mission of the program is the implementation of effective treatment technologies onboard ships. This process requires both the development of treatment technologies, as well as the ability to test, evaluate, regulate and use these technologies. Appropriate projects for this funding opportunity can address any problem along this spectrum.

Treatment technologies being proposed for investigation should: have promise of being effective at removing, inactivating, or preventing the transfer of aquatic organisms in ballast water; be practicable from the standpoint of ship operations, safety, environmental protection; have the ability to meet all regulatory requirements; and have the potential to be developed into a commercially viable product.

Proposals for projects that are not aimed at developing a specific treatment technology ARE applicable to this funding opportunity, but should clearly outline how the project is necessary for the ultimate implementation of effective treatment technologies onboard ships.

It is expected that treatment development will normally be conducted using a phased approach, starting with small-scale experiments proving the proposed treatment technology concept, followed by larger-scale experiments demonstrating the feasibility of the technology, then full-scale demonstrations under conditions close to real world (for example, ship-board technologies would be demonstrated on board a ship). Ultimately, prototype treatment units would be field-tested under actual conditions experienced in the maritime industry.

Projects supported by the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program typically cover just one phase of development. Consideration for a project at a particular phase of development would depend on the success of projects in earlier phases. We ask that applicants identify the program area, as described below, into which their proposal best fits.

1. Basic or applied research that provides information necessary for the development of ballast water treatment technologies or the tools necessary to test, evaluate, regulate or use them. Research may be in any relevant area of science, including biology, chemistry, engineering, ecology, economics, mathematics, or physics. The maximum amount that will be funded for a single proposal in this area is $200,000.

2. Laboratory-scale to pilot-scale controlled experiments that demonstrate the feasibility and development of ballast water treatment technologies or the tools necessary to test, evaluate, regulate or use them. Pilot-scale experiments may be land- or ship- based, and must involve projects that have proven their potential in prior laboratory-scale experiments. Prior experiments need not have been supported by the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program. The maximum amount that will be funded for a single proposal in this area is $200,000.

3. Full-scale controlled experiments that demonstrate, in a close to real-world setting, the practicability and effectiveness of ballast water treatment technologies or the tools necessary to test, evaluate, regulate or use them. Experiments may be land- or ship-based, and must involve projects that have demonstrated their feasibility and potential for development in prior pilot-scale experiments. Prior experiments need not have been supported by the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program. Proposals in this category may request the use of a MARAD vessel. If a vessel-based test is proposed, the proposal must demonstrate the importance of that vessel use to the outcome of the experiment. Use of a MARAD vessel is not required. The maximum amount that will be funded for a single proposal in this area is $400,000.

Any funding used to support engineering on a MARAD vessel may be funded directly to MARAD, rather than to the applicant. However, in any event, these engineering costs must be reported in the proposal budget, and *do count* toward the maximum funding amount.

4. Prototype or commercial ballast water field tests that demonstrate the effectiveness and viability of treatment technologies, or the tools necessary to test, evaluate, regulate or use them, under real shipping conditions. Technologies must have previously demonstrated their effectiveness and practicability, for example by pilot- or full-scale controlled experiments or by prior field tests with well-documented results. Prior experiments need not have been supported by the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program. The maximum amount that will be funded for a single proposal in this area is $400,000.

Any funding used to support engineering on a MARAD vessel may be funded directly to MARAD, rather than to the applicant. However, in any event, these engineering costs must be reported in the proposal budget, and *do count* toward the maximum funding amount.

B. Use of MARAD Ships as Test Platforms for Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Projects

The U.S. Maritime Administration is making available a limited number of vessels to be used as test platforms for ballast water technology demonstration projects. Proposed projects that have demonstrated their merit through success in previous phases and have high impact and high scientific or professional merit will be given higher priority for use of a MARAD vessel, provided that a vessel appropriate to that project is available and all other requirements of MARAD for vessel use are met.

Applicants may apply for both funding and the use of a MARAD vessel to support a single ballast water project, but it is not necessary to request use of a MARAD vessel in order to receive consideration for funding, nor is it necessary to request funding in order to receive consideration for use of a MARAD vessel. Any proposal requesting both funding and the use of a MARAD vessel, however, will only be awarded funding if it (a) is selected for funding; (b) is approved by MARAD for use on a vessel; and (c) meets all requirements posed by MARAD as conditions of use of the vessel, throughout the duration of the project. Funding may be denied to an otherwise worthy proposal requesting both funding and the use of a MARAD vessel, if discussions between the applicant and MARAD are incomplete at the time funding decisions are made. Any applicant considering use of a MARAD vessel must state this in the letter of intent, and all necessary arrangements between the applicant and MARAD must be worked out to MARAD's satisfaction prior to submission of the full proposal. These arrangements include a determination of specific budgetary requirements for engineering activity on a MARAD vessel.

Note: Availability of MARAD vessels is not automatic; MARAD reserves the right to agree to, or decline any request. Due to security restrictions in the aftermath of 9/11/01, the number and frequency of visits to a participating vessel, and the number of visitors at any given time, may be limited. All visits must be scheduled and approved in advance by a vessel's Point of Contact (POC) (to be designated). Also, approval for use of a MARAD vessel for testing will take into consideration the degree to which existing systems may be disturbed. In no case may operational or mission capability be compromised. Decisions in this regard will be made solely by MARAD.

C. Program Priorities

1. Project Necessity and Chance for Success. The Program priorities include supporting projects that are necessary to meet the program objectives laid out in section IA, and that have a high chance of success. For this reason, proposals will be selected with the following programmatic priority: subject to the quality and number of proposals received and availability of funds, an attempt will be made to fund ONLY those proposals that score better than 4 out of 10 on

BOTH elements of evaluation criteria 1.

2. Geographical distribution. Because the problems associated with invasive species from ballast water occur wherever there is maritime commerce, the program seeks to develop and demonstrate technologies appropriate to all areas of the country engaged in maritime trade. This goal may be met by a suite of technologies adapted to particular regions or water conditions, or by one or more technologies that may be applied universally.

3. Commercialization potential. Because even powerful ballast water treatment technologies will only stop invasions if they are actually employed by the maritime industry, the Program seeks to emphasize support of technologies with clear potential to be commercially viable. Proposals demonstrating this potential may include these features: participation of commercial interests in developing and executing proposed projects, commercial investments of manpower, funding, or other resources, in the technology, and well-thought out long-term development plans.

4. Regulatory approval. Because management of ballast water is regulated, the ability to meet regulatory requirements is an important factor in the demonstration of ballast water technologies. For this reason, proposals requesting experimental approval from the Coast Guard will be given the following priority: subject to the quality and number of proposals received and availability of funds, an attempt will be made to fund at least one prototype or commercial ballast water treatment technology field test that has been accepted into the Coast Guard STEP program under 16 U.S.C. 4711(b)(1).

II. Award Information

A. Resource Availability

Depending on Congressional appropriation, it is anticipated that up to about $1.5 Million will be available for project support in FY2007. If such appropriations are available for this competition, it is anticipated that between 5 and 8 awards, with a median value of about $200,000 will be awarded.

B. Project/Award Period

Projects can be for a maximum of two years' duration. Start date for selected grants should be no earlier than June 1, 2007.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding from non-Federal applicants will be funded through project grants or cooperative agreements. We will use cooperative agreements if the proposed project includes substantial involvement by the federal agency funding the project that will be described in the award. Examples of substantial involvement

may include collaboration in research, participation in selection of key personnel, or approval of key stages in the project before subsequent steps are undertaken. Proposals selected for funding from Federal applicants will be funded through inter-agency transfers. Contact Dorn Carlson, listed under Agency Contacts, with questions about grants, cooperative agreements, or inter-agency transfers.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are individuals, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, Federal, State, local and Indian tribal governments, foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, and international organizations. Applications from non-Federal and eligible Federal applicants (including NOAA employees) will be evaluated in the same selection process. PLEASE NOTE: Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another Federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from applicants, the Economy Act (31 USC1535) is not an appropriate legal basis.

Only those who submit letters of intent by the letter of intent deadline are eligible to submit full proposals.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost sharing or matching funds is NOT required. However, any such funding (direct or indirect) offered by the Applicant will be considered favorably in the Evaluation Criteria of Project Costs.

C. Other

Proposals must meet the statutory requirements of Ballast Water Management Demonstration Program projects as codified in Title 16,United States Code, section 4714, including the requirement that installation and construction of the technologies and practices used in the demonstration program must be performed in the United States.

Certain actions, such as discharge of water containing materials defined as pollutants by authorized regulatory agencies, or discharge of unexchanged ballast water from beyond the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone into the Great Lakes, may require regulatory approval. A proposal that requires such approval in order to carry out its work plan may be considered ineligible for funding if (a) the applicant does not request approval from the appropriate regulatory body, (b) the regulatory body denies the request, or (c) the regulatory body has not decided whether to grant the request at the time funding decisions under this program are made.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to request Application Package

Applications are available through grants.gov. If an applicant does not have internet access, materials may also be requested from the Agency Contacts listed in section VII.

B. Notes on Grants.gov submissions

Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks, involving multiple steps, including: 1) registration with the Central Contract Registry, 2) acquisition of a DUNS number, and 3) confirmation of registration with grants.gov. In order to allow sufficient time for this process, you should register as soon as you decide you intend to apply, even if you are not yet ready to submit your proposal.

More detailed instructions on submitting through grants.gov can be found at the grants.gov homepage, and a document on "Suggestions for Electronic Submission" is available on the National Sea Grant College Program "National Funding Opportunities" website. To access this site, go to the NSGO site (http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov) and click on the "View Requests for Proposals" button.

C. Content and Form of the Application Submission

1. General Requirements. Proposals are expected to have: a rigorous, hypothesis-based scientific work plan, or a well-defined, logical approach to address an engineering problem; a strong rationale for the proposed work; appropriate advance interaction with regulatory agencies; and a clear relationship with the ultimate users of the information. Projects undertaken jointly with industry, business, multiple investigators, or other agencies with interest in the problem are encouraged. Their contribution to the project may be in the form of collaboration, in-kind services, or dollar support.

Applicants are encouraged to consult the Program website for updated information http://www.oarhq.noaa.gov/ballast that may be useful in preparation of a proposal.

2. Format Requirements. All pages must be single- or double-spaced, printed or typed in at least a 10-point font, and printed on metric A4 (210 mmx297 mm) or 8.5"x11" paper.

Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description may not exceed 2 pages in the letter of intent, and 15 pages in the full proposal. Tables and visual materials, including figures, charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations, are included in the page limitation for the Project Description. As noted

below, literature cited, budget information, current and pending support, resumes of investigators, and appendices, if any, are not considered part of the Project Description and are not included in the page limitation. Conformance to the page limitation will be strictly enforced.

All information needed for review of the proposal should be included in the main text, except materials in the following appendices:

Appendix A: 1) correspondence from permitting agencies indicating satisfactory progress in receiving required permits or approvals; and 2) letters of support from other sources.

Appendix B (OPTIONAL): 1) published results of past work, and 2)progress and final reports of past work submitted to NOAA or other funding entity. This material will be made available to the technical panel, but review of these documents will NOT be required.

No other appendices are permitted.

3. Content Requirements--Letters of intent. The following information must be included:

a. Signed Title Page: Identify the phase of development for the proposal by using one of the following terms in the title: "basic research," "applied research," "laboratory-scale," "pilot-scale," "full-scale land-based," "full-scale ship-based," "prototype field test," or "commercial unit field test." The title page should be signed by the authorized representative. Electronic signatures submitted through grants.gov satisfy this requirement. Principal investigators and collaborators should be identified by affiliation and contact information, including, if available, email addresses. The total estimated project costs (Federal funds being requested and matching funds, if any) should be listed as well as the source of the matching funds.

b. A concise (2-page limit) description of the project, its experimental design, its expected output or products, the anticipated users of the products, and its anticipated impact. Proposers should consult the Evaluation Criteria for additional guidance in preparing the letter of intent.

c. Resume (2-page limit) of the Principal Investigator.

No institutional signatures or completed Federal government form sare needed while submitting letters of intent.

4. Content Requirements--full proposals. The following information must be included:

a. Signed Title Page: Identify the phase of development for the

proposal by using one of the following terms in the title: "basic research," "applied research," "laboratory-scale," "pilot-scale," "full-scale land-based," "full-scale ship-based," "prototype field test," or "commercial unit field test." The title page should be signed by the authorized representative. Electronic signatures submitted through grants.gov satisfy signature requirements. Identify the Principal Investigators and collaborators and the institutional representative by affiliation and contact information. List the total amount of Federal funds being requested for each budget period; for projects involving multiple institutions, the total should include all sub-recipient budgets.

b. Project Summary: It is critical that the project summary accurately describes the research being proposed and conveys all essential elements of the research. Applicants are encouraged to use the Sea Grant Project Summary Form 90-2, but may use their own form as long as it provides the following information:

(1) Title: Use the exact title as it appears in the rest of the application.

(2) Investigators: List the names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project. Start with the Principal Investigator.

(3) Funding: Report the funding request for each year of the project, including matching funds if appropriate.

(4) Project Period: Give the start and completion dates. Propose a start date of June 1, 2007, or later. Project activities can extend for up to two years.

(5) Project objectives, methodology, and rationale: Provide a brief statement of the rationale for the project, the scientific or technical objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, a summary of work to be completed, and a description of how results will be documented and disseminated.

c. Project Description (15-page limit):

(1) Introduction/Background/Justification: The applicant may wish to include in this section: (i) current state of knowledge; (ii)contributions that the study will make to the particular discipline or subject area; (iii) contributions and impacts the study will make toward ballast water technology development; and (iv) as appropriate, contributions of investigator's previously funded research results to current proposal. Applicants may assume that reviewers understand the importance of preventing further ballast water introductions of AIS, and should not devote a significant portion of their page limit to addressing this background information.

This section should also include a discussion of the prior

technical research that indicates the likelihood of success of the proposed project. If the proposal is for a pilot-scale project, this discussion should include a description of laboratory experiments on the proposed technology, and the results of those experiments; if the proposal is for a full-scale project, the discussion should include prior laboratory- and pilot-scale experiments and results. Wherever possible, cite the peer-reviewed literature where these results were published.

(2) Research or Technical Plan: include the following:

(i) objectives to be achieved, hypotheses to be tested;

(ii) plan of work and performance milestones - discuss how stated project objectives will be achieved. Include milestones that describe measurable accomplishments associated with each task of the proposed project, and that have specific due dates;

(iii) role of project personnel;

(iv) if appropriate, Research Protocol for AIS prevention. Research activities funded under this program must not cause or accelerate the spread of aquatic nuisance species to non-infested watersheds. Therefore, if the proposed project involves the use of ballast water or simulated ballast water to which living organisms are added that are not already established at the site of the project, or if the project involves increasing the population or viability of living ballast water organisms that are not already established at the site of project, the proposal must describe the research protocol that will be used to assure that these organisms are not released to the environment in a viable state. Proposals meeting the above conditions that lack a suitable protocol will not be considered.

Proposals that do not involve addition, concentration, enrichment, or increasing the viability of living organisms do not need to include this research protocol. Guidelines for developing suitable protocols are available from the internet website http://www.ANSTaskForce.gov/resprot.htm, or from Dorn Carlson, listed under Agency Contacts.

(3) Reporting Plan: This plan should provide a timeline for submission of reports on progress toward meeting work plan milestones. Reports must include the measurable milestones with specific due dates that are outlined in the work plan.

(4) Outreach Plan: Provide an Outreach Plan of the steps to betaken to make the results of the project available to appropriate users. Discuss presentation of project results at an annual PI meeting and other forums, publication of results (including whether the publication will be peer reviewed), and other outreach efforts.

(5) Impacts: Describe in objective terms how and when meeting the

objectives of this project will impact the Nation's ability to use effective ballast water treatment technologies. Describe what else must happen, in addition to meeting the stated objectives of this project, for these impacts to be realized

(6) Coordination with other Program Elements: Describe any other proposals that are essential to the success of this proposal. Describe and document any coordination with other agency programs or ongoing research efforts. Include the following where appropriate:

(i) If the proposal involves the discharge of any chemical, such as a biocide or water modifying agent, or chemical decomposition products or residuals, into waters of the United States, describe and document the coordination with the appropriate State environmental or natural resource agency responsible to determine if a discharge permit is needed and will be issued.

(ii) If the proposal involves the discharge of unexchanged ballast water in any area where it is regulated by the state, Federal or Canadian government, describe and document the coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard or the appropriate agency to determine if approval is needed and will be issued.

(iii) If the proposal involves the installation of prototype equipment on an operating ship, describe and document the coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard and the American Bureau of Shipping concerning whether approval is needed.

(iv) If the proposal involves the discharge of ballast water in any jurisdiction that places other limitations or conditions on that discharge, describe and document the coordination with the agency responsible for determining if that discharge meets those limitations or conditions.

(6) Vessel Selection (if appropriate): Applications proposing shipboard demonstrations of ballast water management should address the requirements and priorities listed in the National Invasive Species Act of 1996 (16 U.S.C. 4711-4714) for selecting vessels for demonstration projects. These requirements are available through the Program web site http://www.oarhq.noaa.gov/ballast, from Dorn Carlson at the National Sea Grant Office, or from Carolyn Junemann U.S. Maritime Administration (listed under Agency Contacts, Section VII). Additionally, applicants must indicate whether they are coordinating with MARAD with respect to using a MARAD ship.

(7) Long Term Development Plan

(i) For specific treatment technologies. Describe the activities that will be necessary to further develop the ballast water technology to the point where it is commercially viable. Include in this discussion not only optimization of the technology's treatment capabilities, but also the operational, safety, regulatory and

business factors that must be considered to transition this technology to commercial field use, and how these factors are being addressed in the proposed project and planned future work. If the proposal is for a full-scale controlled experiment or a prototype or commercial ballast water treatment technology field test, this description must include a detailed discussion of the steps needed to transition this technology from the research and development arena to the commercial sector, including an anticipated timeline for this transition, a discussion of the financial and other resources needed at each step to make the transition, and anticipated sources of these resources.

(ii) For projects other than specific treatment technologies, describe the activities that will be necessary for ballast water stakeholders to use the results of this project in the implementation of effective treatment technologies onboard ships. This description should include a thorough description of technology and method development, as well as outreach and extension needs.

d. Literature Cited

e. Budget and Budget Justification: Although proposals are funded from a single year appropriation (fiscal year 2007), project activities may extend for up to 2 years. There should be a separate budget for each year of the project, as well as a cumulative annual budget for the entire project. Applicants are encouraged to use the Sea Grant Budget Form 90-4, but may use their own form as long as it provides the same information as the Sea Grant form. Subcontracts should have a separate budget page. Indicate matching funds if provided. Provide justification for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested.

f. Current and Pending Support: Provide information on all current and pending Federal support for ongoing projects and proposals, including subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. Include the proposed project and all other projects or activities using Federal assistance and requiring a portion of time of the principal investigator or other senior personnel. Describe the relationship between the proposed project and these other projects, and the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be stated. Similar information must be provided for all proposals already submitted or submitted concurrently to other possible sponsors, including those within the Departments of Commerce, the Interior, and Transportation.

g. Resumes (2 pages maximum per investigator).

h. Standard Application Forms: The standard application package received from grants.gov or from the contacts listed in section VII must be used.

D. Submission Dates and Times

1. Submission Dates

Letters of intent must be received by 5:00 pm EDT on Thursday, September 14, 2006. Full proposals must be received by 5 p.m. EST on Wednesday, January 10, 2007. Submissions throughgrants.gov will have a date and time indicator on them. Hard copies will be date and time stamped upon receipt. Applications which are not received by the deadline will not be reviewed. Only those who submit letters of intent meeting the letter of intent deadline and other requirements of this notice are eligible to submit full proposals.

2. Exceptions

Hard copy applications arriving after the above deadlines will be accepted for review only if the applicant can document that the application was provided to a delivery service that guaranteed delivery prior to the specified closing date and time and as long as the applications are received by the NSGO no later than 5 p.m three business days following the closing date.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

F. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

G. Other Submission Requirements

1. Proposal Submission Instructions

Letters of intent may be submitted through grants.gov or by hard copy (one UNBOUND original and one copy) to: Mrs. Geri Taylor, National Sea Grant College Program, R/SG, Attn: Ballast Water Competition, Room 11841, NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (phone number for express mail applications is 301-713-2435.)

Full Proposals should be submitted through grants.gov. Applicants without internet access may submit hard copies (one UNBOUND original and one copy) to: Mrs. Geri Taylor, National Sea Grant College Program, R/SG, Attn: Ballast Water Competition, Room 11841,NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (phone number for express mail applications is 301-713-2435.)

Facsimile and electronic mail transmissions of proposals will not be accepted for either letters of intent or Full Proposals.

2. The following additional requirements apply to applications

requesting use of a MARAD vessel:

Applications for shipboard testing must satisfy all MARAD requirements for the use of their vessels as test platforms. For purposes of this test phase, vessels cannot be moved from their existing locations. However, testing may be conducted under certain conditions during temporary vessel movements such as sea trials. Applicants for use of a MARAD vessel (for Ballast Water technology projects) must submit with their letter of intent a Standard Form 424 containing the name, affiliation, address and phone number of the principal investigator requesting the use of a MARAD vessel. The applicant must also provide:

The type and location of the vessel required, from a list of available vessels (obtainable from Carolyn Junemann, listed under Agency Contacts), and the projected time and duration of tests.

To assure timely vessel assignments, applicants are stronglyurged to contact Ms. Junemann, listed under Agency Contacts as soon as possible to discuss vessel availability and vessel use requirements.

A description of the project proposed to be conducted on the ship. If the applicant is also applying for funding under this Request for Proposals to support this project, a copy of the complete application for funding submitted may be provided as the description of the project.

In response to this application, MARAD will open a dialog with the applicant, during which additional information relating to the logistical and other requirements of the project will be required of the applicant.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The five technical evaluation criteria for full proposals submitted under this announcement are as follows:

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals: (30 points). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, this assessment will evaluate two components: Necessity of project (15 percent): the need for the proposed activity as a necessary step toward the development of ballast water treatment technologies or the tools necessary to test, evaluate, regulate or use them; Potential for success (15 percent): whether the potential for the project to achieve its stated impacts is commensurate with the significance of those impacts, (i.e. does the project have a good chance of success, or are the impacts so significant that the project is warranted even with a smaller chance of success.)

2. Technical/scientific merit: (40 percent): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. This assessment will evaluate the scientific quality of the experimental design, including (10) appropriateness of the experimental design to achieve the proposed objectives; (15) the degree to which the proposal demonstrates the thorough understanding of, and builds upon, the current state of the science; (5) the adequacy of technical documentation of statements made in the proposal; and (10) the degree to which scientific, technical, logistical, and business considerations have been integrated in a long term development plan.

3. Overall qualification of applicants (15 percent): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This assessment will evaluate (5)the degree to which the investigators are qualified to execute the proposed activity; (5) the degree to which stakeholder input was incorporated into planning of the activity and will be involved in the execution of the activity (as appropriate); and (5) the investigators'record of achievement with previous funding, including publication of results.

4. Project costs (10 percent): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. This assessment will evaluate (5) the degree to which the proposed budget is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame; and (5) The degree to which the applicant has minimized the need for program funding by identifying low-cost alternatives, and by securing commitments from partners to provide in-kind services, use of equipment, or matching funds.

5. Outreach and education (5 percent): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This assessment will evaluate the effectiveness and timeliness of the actions in the reporting plan to disseminate results of this work to appropriate users.

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted at both the letter of intent and full proposal stages to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

Letters of intent will be not be subjected to a selection process. Letters of intent will be used to assess the nature of full proposals to be expected, to select appropriate technical reviewers for full proposals, and to tailor technical, formatting and content guidance that will be supplied to applicants who submitted letters of intent, to assist them in deciding whether to submit a full proposal

and in writing a full proposal. All those (and only those) who submitted letters of intent meeting the deadline and other requirement of this notice are eligible to submit full proposals.

Full proposals will be peer-reviewed by an expert review panel consisting of government, academic, and industry representatives. Reviewers will be asked to evaluate the proposals using the evaluation criteria listed in this announcement. Panel members will provide individual evaluations of each proposal, and their ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. The review panel will provide no consensus advice to the Program Officer.

The Program Officer will consider these evaluations when recommending to the Selecting Official which applications should be selected for award.

C. Selection Factors

The selecting official will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.

2. Balance/distribution of funds:
   a. Geographically,
   b. By type of institutions,
   c. By type of partners,
   d. By research areas, and/or
   e. By project types.

3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies.

4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.

5. Applicant's prior award performance.

6. Partnerships with / Participation of targeted group.

7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

Selection Factor 5 includes reporting of results.

Applicants may be asked to respond to questions or modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of the award. Subsequent grant administration procedures will be in accordance with current agency grants procedures.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, awards for successful applications are expected to be made by June 1, 2007. The start date that should be used on the Application for Federal Assistance (Form424) should be no earlier than this date.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The notice of award made by NOAA is signed by the NOAA Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. It is provided electronically or by postal mail to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

B. Award Administration

Projects selected for funding by NOAA in Sea Grant states may be administered through the Sea Grant Program in that state. (Sea Grant states are: Alabama; Alaska; California; Connecticut; Delaware; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana; Maine; Maryland; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Mississippi; New York; New Hampshire; New Jersey; North Carolina; Ohio; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Puerto Rico; Rhode Island; South Carolina; Texas; Vermont; Virginia; Washington; Wisconsin.)

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification of Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389) is applicable to this solicitation.

2. Limitations of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are canceled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including our NOAA Administrative Order

216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216--6--TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist(e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

E. Reporting

Financial reports are to be submitted to the Federal Grants Officer and Performance (technical) reports are to be submitted to the Federal Program Officer. Program and financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually. Program reports should include progress on identified milestones. Reports may be required to be submitted electronically or by postal mail. If they are submitted by postal mail, all financial and progress reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies).

VII. Agency Contacts

Dorn Carlson, Program Director for Aquatic Invasive Species, the National Sea Grant Office, NOAA, 301-713-2435, email Dorn.Carlson@noaa.gov; or Pamela Thibodeaux, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 703-358-2493, email Pamela_Thibodeaux@fws.gov; or Carolyn Junemann, U.S. Maritime Administration, 202-366-1920, email carolyn.junemann@marad.dot.gov.

VIII. Other Information

A. In addition to producing an annual progress report and a final report, successful applicants will be expected to present their project at an annual ballast water meeting in the continental United States during each year that the project is ongoing. Applicants should

consider travel costs to these meetings when preparing their budgets.

B. MARAD will determine which proposals will be permitted to use a MARAD ship, which components of the selected projects will be fundedo r performed on a MARAD ship and the total duration of MARAD ship use for each proposal. Successful applicants for use of a MARAD vessel will be required to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or contract with MARAD, which will address in detail MARAD requirements for the use of their vessels as test platforms. Shipboard installations for the testing purposes shall be temporary in nature; successful applicants shall be required to dismantle all temporary installations during vessel activation, if any, at the end of testing and reinstall any equipment removed during the temporary installation. Temporary installations must not impact the vessel's safety at any time during the installation, removal, and testing. Applicants will berequired to submit proof of insurance as requested under the MOA.

C. All Department of the Interior assistance awards are subject to the requirements of 43 CFR Part 12, Administrative and Audit Requirements and Cost Principles for Assistance Programs.